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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: CROSS-STRAIT RELATIONS

Summary: During June 7-9, controversy over the foreign permanent residency status of officials in the Ma Ying-jeou administration continued to remain in the spotlight of the Taiwan media. In the meantime, news coverage also focused on the upcoming talks between Taiwan's Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) and China's Association for Relations across the Taiwan Strait (ARATS), on the tuition increase at local universities, the fertilizer price hike around the island, and on agricultural losses caused by the recent heavy rains in central and southern Taiwan. The centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" ran a banner headline on June 9 on page three reading "For the First Time in SEF and ARATS Dealings, Vice-Ministerial Level [Taiwan] Administrative Officials Will Sit down at the Negotiation Table [with China]." In terms of editorials and commentaries, an op-ed in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" said the real challenges for the KMT administration are to ask China to remove its missiles aimed at Taiwan and to relax its efforts in squeezing Taiwan out of the international community. End summary.

"[Asking] China to Remove Missiles [Aimed at Taiwan] Will Not Be Easy"

Dr. Lin Cheng-yi, research fellow at the Institute of European and American Studies, Academia Sinica, opined in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation: 520,000] (6/9):

"... President Ma Ying-jeou has said more than once that China's removal of its missiles aimed at Taiwan is a pre-condition for both sides of the Taiwan Strait to clinch a peace accord. Both sides of the Taiwan Strait are about to launch direct charter flights over the weekends, and it will be an ironic and dissonant scene if China continues to increase its missiles deployed in Fujian, Guangdong, Jiangxi, Zhejiang and Anhui provinces. As a result, not only the KMT, but also the DPP, the United States, Japan and European Union should all join in demanding that China remove, and not just freeze or reduce, all its missile deployment aimed at Taiwan.

"If China only removes the missiles targeting Taiwan without destroying or dismantling their warheads, it will still be able to deploy those missiles at Taiwan if the DPP resumes power or if tension rises across the Taiwan Strait again in the future. How to kill several birds with one stone will be the focal point for Beijing when it ponders altering the missile deployment aimed at Taiwan. It is the United States that Beijing will appeal to when it reduces the missiles targeting Taiwan, even though the move will also create a certain political and psychological impact on Taiwan. If Beijing wants to extend a goodwill gesture, it can remove those missiles in a low-profile and unilateral manner or do it with some publicity. But if it insists on negotiating with the United States [over the issue], it will mean that it has a hidden agenda. Different voices have arisen now in the United States with regard to whether or not Washington should sell F-16 fighter jets to Taiwan or help Taiwan get the submarines. Such a debate will become more complicated once Beijing decides to remove the missiles aimed at Taiwan. It will also become a focus of discussion among major European countries whether the EU should lift its weapons embargo on China. ...

"The KMT administration is about to fulfill its promises on direct flights across the Taiwan Strait and opening Taiwan to Chinese tourists. But how to ask Beijing to remove the missiles and relax its efforts to squeeze Taiwan out of the international community are the real challenges. Should both sides engage in talks over the [removal of] missiles, a written agreement will be more assuring than China's [oral] announcement that it will remove the missiles. ... Deeds are more important than words when it comes to China's removal of missiles. No matter whether Beijing reduces, removes or destroys the missiles [targeting Taiwan], it will be conducive for the future development of cross-Strait relations. But what is important is that prior to Beijing's announcement that it will renounce the use of force against Taiwan, Taipei must show its determination to defend itself, and Washington must continue assisting Taiwan to defend itself based on the 'Taiwan Relations Act.' It is fine for Taiwan to welcome China's move to remove the missiles, but Taipei should not optimistically believe that the shadow of war across the Taiwan Strait will be gone and that both sides will live in peace forever."

WANG